The Contribution of an Ideological vs. Instrumental Motherhood Orientation to the Psychological Functioning of Religious Jewish Mothers of Large Families

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CHILDREN ARE A JOY

Yehoshua Sobol

• Children are a joy
  children are a blessing
  and you have a heart of gold

• Bring out two bring out three bring out four kids you'll get apartments
  with a foyer & kitchen and two little rooms;

• Bring out four bring out five bring out six kids you'll get enjoyment
  and respect from relatives, you love kids;

• Bring out six bring out seven bring out eight kids it's not a joke
  the land needs a lot of nice youth;

• Bring out a dozen and why not a "chai" (18)

• Bring out twenty kids
  God will still grant it sustenance too, whatever the kids need;

• God is great, it's hard for him to suffer as one gets everything,
  to one he pushes money, power and fun and to you he gives kids
Research Rationale

• Children are a source of maternal stress
• Religious families tend to have large numbers of children
• The cognitive orientation towards motherhood and children may influence coping with maternal stress

Children as a Source of Maternal Stress

• Brown & Harris (1978) – Children as a vulnerability factor in maternal depression
• Walker & Walker (1980) – Number of children and work status as factor in maternal state / trait anxiety
• Sheppard (1997) – Family size as predictor of maternal depression
• Nair et al. (2003) – Family size as risk factor in maternal substance abuse and parenting stress
• Serge et al. (2007) – Number of children as predictor of postpartum depression
• Sank et al (2003) – Family size as predictor of perceived social support among mothers of children with clefts
• Loewenthal (2003) – mixed findings
Family Size in Israel

- 2.2 average children in Jewish families
- 3.6 average children in B’nei Brak
- 4+ children in 12.3% of Jewish families
- 5.3 average children in ultra-religious Jerusalem neighborhoods
- Religious families commonly with 8-12 children
Large Families among the Religious

- Biblical commandment – “Be fruitful and multiply.”
- Religious prohibitions against birth control and abortion
- Faith in G-d’s provision
- Post Holocaust replenishment of Jewish people
- Early age of marriage
- Social norm in the religious population
- National Insurance stipends, benefits

Orientation to Motherhood & Children

- Ideological orientation
  - Religious reasons (fulfill G-d’s command to be fruitful)
  - Good of the people (larger religious population)
  - Motherhood as a calling

- Instrumental orientation
  - Personal needs (fear of death, assistance in old age)
  - Family needs (help other children, lively home)
Research Questions

• Is orientation to motherhood a multidimensional construct, and can reliable scales be constructed?

• What is the relation between ideological and instrumental orientation to motherhood with measures of psychological functioning?

• Does orientation towards motherhood contribute to psychological functioning over and above known variables (e.g., age, social support, religious support)?

• Do known variables (age, social support, religious support) contribute to psychological functioning over and above orientation towards motherhood?

Research Participants

• 80 Jewish women residing in Israel
  – All self-identified as being religious (90%) or ultra-religious (10%)
  – Predominantly married (94%) and born in Israel (91%)
  – Age 29-54 ($M=42.8$, $SD=5.8$)
  – 6-12 children ($M=7.9$, $SD=1.8$)
  – All with high school education, 47% BA or MA
  – 59% Ashkenazim, 37% Sephardim, 4% Other
### Study Measures - Predictors

- Social Support - *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Parley, 1988), 12 items

- Religious Support - *Religious Support Scale* (Fiala, Bjorck, & Gorsuch, 2002), 21 items

- Motherhood Orientation - *Ideological / Instrumental Motherhood Orientation Scale* (Lazar & Kayam, 2007), 16 items

### Study Measures - Psychological Functioning

- Depression - *Center for Epidemiological Studies – Depressed Mood Scale* (Radloff, 1977), 20 items

- Anxiety - *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory* (Spielberger, 1976), 20 items

- Life Satisfaction - *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), 5 items

- Perceived Health - *General Health Perceptions* (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992), 5 items
Research question #1

Is orientation to motherhood a multidimensional construct, and can reliable scales be constructed to reliably measure these dimensions?

Scale construction

- Items were constructed on basis of preliminary interviews
- Exploratory factor analysis
- Dimension identification, item retention
- Reliability analysis
**Principal Component Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation**

**Rotated Component Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Ideological</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m9 I see motherhood as a calling</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m3 I am part of a chain of generations to pass the tradition on</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m11 I educate my children to influence society with religious values</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m1 The knowledge that I am fulfilling G-d’s commandments gives me the strength to continue</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m15 I raise my children with the knowledge that G-d has put them in my hands for a purpose</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m16 I have many children in order to enhance G-d’s name in the world</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m7 I have many children since this is an important command</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m10 I educate my children since it helps me to better myself</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m8 I have children for the challenge to educate them</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m14 I have children in order not to die and leave nothing behind</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m2 I raise my children in order to have someone to take care of me when I get older</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m13 If it wasn’t a religious commandment, I would have fewer children</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variance Explained (Total=52.2%)

- 31.7%
- 20.5%

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**Ideological / Instrumental Motherhood Orientation Scale (IIMOS)**

- **Ideological Motherhood Orientation**
  - 7 items
  - Chronbach $\alpha = .88$

- **Instrumental Motherhood Orientation**
  - 8 items
  - Chronbach $\alpha = .79$

- Pearson correlation $r = -0.24$ ($p < 0.05$)
Research question #2

What is the relation between ideological and instrumental orientation to motherhood with measures of psychological functioning?

Pearson Intercorrelations between Study Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Religious Support</th>
<th>Ideological</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Dep.</th>
<th>Anx.</th>
<th>Health</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious support</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.48**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
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<tr>
<td>orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
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<tr>
<td>orientation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>-.38**</td>
<td>-.49**</td>
<td>-.46**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Health</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td>-.55**</td>
<td>-.53**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>-.43**</td>
<td>-.61**</td>
<td>-.61**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.05  ** p < 0.01
Motherhood Orientation and Psychological Functioning

- **Ideological orientation** is associated with **lower** levels of maternal depression and anxiety and with **higher** levels of maternal life satisfaction and perceived health

- **Instrumental orientation** is associated with **higher** levels of maternal depression and anxiety and with **lower** levels of maternal life satisfaction and perceived health

Research question #3

Does orientation towards motherhood contribute to psychological functioning over and above known variables (age, social support, religious support)?
Hierarchical Regression Analysis

- Criterion – Anxiety + Depression
- Model 1 – Demographics (age)
- Model 2 – Social Support
- Model 3 – Religious Support
- Model 4 – Motherhood Orientation Scales

- $R^2$ Change
- Standardized Beta Coefficients

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Anxiety + Depression on Predictor Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$\beta$ Social Support</th>
<th>$\beta$ Religious Support</th>
<th>$\beta$ Ideological</th>
<th>$\beta$ Instrumental</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age, SS</td>
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<td>.09**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age, SS, RS</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age, SS, RS, Orientations</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research question #4
Do known variables (age, social support, religious support) contribute to psychological functioning over and above orientation towards motherhood?

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Anxiety + Depression on Predictor Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$ Ideological</th>
<th>$\beta$ Instrumental</th>
<th>$\beta$ Age</th>
<th>$\beta$ Social Support</th>
<th>$\beta$ Religious Support</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientations</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>- .39**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientations, Age</td>
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<td>.09**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientations, Age, SS</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientations, Age, SS, RS</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.31*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

• Multidimensional motherhood orientation plays an important role in maternal psychological functioning
• Possible overall positive orientation – social support, religious support, ideological orientation (+), instrumental orientation (-)
• Question of causality

Implications and Applications

• Importance of cognitive orientation towards stressors in coping
• Stress reduction using cognitive reframing
• Investment of resources in orientation change may be more profitable than search for social or religious support for religious mothers
Future Research

• Causality – longitudinal research
• Role of motherhood orientation in small families
• What about fathers?
• Other populations
  – Non-religious Jews
  – Catholic, Protestant, Moslem mothers (and fathers)
• Relationship between motherhood orientation and other variables
  – Intrinsic / Extrinsic Religious Orientation (Allport, 1967)
  – Multidimensional Motivation for Religious Behavior
    (Lazar, Kravetz, & Fredirich-Kedem, 2002)

Thank You